

NEWS – CONGRESSMAN PETE STARK

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BIPARTISAN, BICAMERAL SUPPORT FOR BILL TO

HELP BRING MISSING CHILDREN HOME

Law Enforcement Would Have Access to Critical Information on Tax Forms

□ WASHINGTON – Today, on National Missing Children's Day, Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA) announced introduction of bipartisan legislation, H.R. 1978, the *Recovering Missing Children Act* along with Rep. Erik Paulsen (R-MN), Rep. Joe Courtney (D-CT), and Rep. Pat Tiberi (R-OH) at a press conference. Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), who has similar legislation, spoke in support, as did advocates and a parent who experienced the abduction of a child.

Each year, 200,000 children are abducted by a family member. Research by the U.S. Treasury Department of 1,700 parental abductions found that in more than one third of the cases, tax returns were filed using the missing child's Social Security number. Hundreds of those tax returns had a new address for the child and the abductor. Yet law enforcement does not have access to this basic information, which could be vital to locating abducted children.

Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA): "Information that could help bring an abducted child home is sitting right under our noses, yet we don't empower law enforcement to use it. We need a system that grants access to the authorities working on a particular abduction case while also respecting and protecting tax filers' privacy. The *Recovering Missing Children Act* strikes that important balance."

The *Recovering Missing Children Act* would amend the Internal Revenue Code, adding the

case of a missing child to the current list of exceptions that allow the release of IRS tax return information. To ensure that taxpayers' rights to privacy are protected, the legislation requires a federal court order for information from tax forms to be released. The release of such information would be limited to federal, state and local law enforcement agents who are personally and directly involved in the investigation of a missing child. The

[National Sheriffs Association has endorsed the legislation](#)

and the

[Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations has also endorsed the legislation](#)

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Sen. Klobuchar (D-MN): "As a former prosecutor, I know that one of law enforcement's highest priorities is working to recover missing children. This is a commonsense way to cut red tape and provide police and prosecutors access to critical information that would help bring missing children home."

In March, Klobuchar chaired a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing examining ways to help law enforcement in their search for missing children. At the hearing, Klobuchar renewed her call to pass her legislation, the *Access to Information about Missing Children Act*, which would help federal, state, and local law enforcement locate missing children whose whereabouts could be discovered through basic information on federal tax returns.

Statements on the Recovering Missing Children Act:

Rep. Erik Paulsen (R-MN): "Every year close to 200,000 children are victims of family abductions. I am honored to join with my colleagues in co-sponsoring legislation that will give

law enforcement professionals around the country the additional tools needed in their efforts to locate missing children and their alleged abductors. Hopefully through the Recovering Missing Children Act, we'll be able to reunite families and help alleviate the anguish so many feel."

Rep. Joe Courtney (D-CT): "This zero-cost, commonsense legislation would give law enforcement an important new tool to use as they search for missing and abducted children. It would breathe instant new life into stalled investigations and give families new hope of reuniting with their loved ones."

Rep. Pat Tiberi (R-OH): "This bill would level the playing field, giving local law enforcement the same tools as federal authorities when investigating missing children cases. Access to this critical information has the potential to help reunite hundreds of children with their families."

Sherriff B.J. Roberts, President, and Aaron D. Kennard, Sheriff (Ret.), Executive Director, National Sheriffs' Association: "Missing children cases are incredibly complex to solve. As such, it is imperative that federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies have every resource necessary to aid in their investigations and bring home missing children. Congressman Stark and Congressman Paulsen, I commend you for your leadership on this issue and the National Sheriffs' Association stands ready to assist you in the passage of the Recovering Missing Children Act during the 112th Congress."

Mika Moulton, parent: “As a parent who experienced a years-long nightmare trying to track down my children who had been abducted by their father, I can tell you that the Recovering Missing Children Act is needed. This piece of legislation is not only important for helping law enforcement recover missing kids, it is critical for the wellbeing of our nation’s children.”

Ernie Allen, President of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children: “In 2007 the Treasury Department’s Inspector General searched a sample of missing child cases for possible information in tax returns that would help us find the children. The results were stunning. The IG found new addresses for 46% of the missing children and 34% of the abductors. Yet, law enforcement has been unable to gain access to that information. Changing the law to allow such access will bring more missing children home. We are deeply grateful to Congressman Stark and bipartisan leaders of the House and Senate and enthusiastically support this common sense change.”

Wendy Jolley-Kabi, Executive Director, Association of Missing and Exploited Children’s Organizations: “The Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations applauds the effort of Reps. Stark, Courtney, Paulsen and Tiberi to permit the use of tax return information in the investigation and prosecution of missing child cases. We must not accept that the federal government may already possess information about where specific missing children are located while federally funded programs continue to search for those same children. Likewise we cannot justify that child abductors report their contact details to the IRS while law enforcement agencies across the country seek to bring those very fugitives to justice. It is imperative that we work together and use all available resources to help bring missing children home.”

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